

## Le rendez-vous(1) (The Date)

Françoise Collin is a French writer who has published several novels: — *Ici, le jour fabuleux* (Le Seuil), *Rose qui peut* (Le Seuil), *331 W 20, élection du président* (Transédition), *Le jardin de Louise* (NB) — a philosophical essay: *Maurice Blanchot et la question de l'écriture* (Gallimard) — various collective works: *La séduction* (Aubier), *Les femmes et leur maîtres* (Christian Bourgois), *Le récit et sa représentation* (Payot), *Le colloque de Tanger-William Burroughs* (Christian Bourgois), *L'émergence d'une culture au féminin* (Saint-Martin, Montréal), *J.L. Borgés* (Chicago Press), and many articles in various journals.

Françoise Collin is well known through her important contribution to *Les Cahiers du Griff*, the feminist Franco-Belgium journal which she founded in 1973 and is presently directing. She initiated several special issues amongst which is one on "Gertrude Stein" and another on "Hannah Arendt".



In *Le rendez-vous* she gives a most sensitive and strong entry into her inner-world, as well as an expression of her innovative style of writing which experiments with language.

The book is divided into three sections, each introduced by lines from R.M. Rilke, which sets the mood: a pale expression of love trying to emerge, daring to be different, and the regret over a loss.

The first section is about "the date" as such, an appointment or an imagined meeting with her dying mother. The paragraphs starting with either 'you' or 'she' are mixed throughout in an interesting narrative process, making the reader wonder who is really talking,

and if the meeting has to do with the mother or the daughter. In French, the "tu" (familiar you) addresses the mother while the "elle" (she) addresses the daughter. The "you" is often interchangeable.

Before "the date", there had never been any touching or affectionate words exchanged between mother and daughter. The last moments are full of regret and nostalgia about their relationship — what it was and what it could have been. "You met in the few hours that were to be the last." (p35). "You were together as you had been at birth. You opened your eyes. You opened your eyes with her on your last day." (p.42)

The second section introduced by "every angel is terrible" (Rilke's lines), suggests the dialectical opposition of things, as well as the daring to do them differently. It is subdivided into eight parts, language exercises on the words: "Veille" (wake), "levée" (rising), "passage", "marcher" (to walk), "nommer" (to name), "aller" (to go), "dire" (to say), "entendre or (to hear). It is a transition between the first and last sections, while using the same theme: "It is the same wake which starts with the birth of one's children to be awake, even when one is asleep. It starts with death, that of one's children. (p.50)

The third section is about the loss of the father. It is "told through a different language, because it is another language which he had taught her". (p.113) This language is more straight-forward, with fewer subtleties than the one used in previous sections. It is like the life of the father — a doctor — and his relationship to his daughter — "a certain clarity, accomplished before death ended it." (p.113) It closes on the relationship between mother and father, wife and husband, "two interlaced lives, resisting fate, the assurance that nothing in the world equals in beauty and dignity the passing away of time, and that words are the price of infirmity". (p.123)

(1) Collins, Françoise. *Le rendez-vous* Paris: Tierce, 1988. 123 pages.

The death of parents — especially of the mother — is a theme much exploited recently, specifically in feminist literature. It has given us some very beautiful texts — not least being that of Simone de Beauvoir in **Une mort très douce**. Françoise Collin's **Le rendez-vous** differs in that her text addresses the mother; it is not a description of her, thus leaving an aura of mystery around her. This beautiful, anguished narrative adds its touching, in-

novative, creative voice to the nostalgic, often sad, yet necessary melody. It is a catharsic way of dealing with sorrow and the need to communicate.

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